

NEVER STOP REACHING OUT TO THE LGBT COMMUNITY

Your ONA covenant is the starting point, not the endpoint, for your outreach to the LGBT community.

- Post a rainbow comma and the words “OPEN AND AFFIRMING” on the masthead of your home page.
- Buy a UCC rainbow flag from UCC Resources and display it above the entrance to your church.
- Show up at the annual Pride Parade and carry a big sign emblazoned with the rainbow comma.
- Observe Pride Sunday with a renewal of your ONA covenant, and publicize it widely.
- Publicize your church’s willingness to host LGBT weddings.
- Design an eye-catching brochure that proclaims your welcome. Share it with visitors, and distribute it at LGBT events. Keep it in stock at the LGBT community center, public libraries, coffee shops and college campuses.
- Meet with LGBT student alliances in local colleges. Make sure they know you’re an Open and Affirming church.

RESOURCES FOR EVANGELISM AND COMMUNICATION

In addition to our suggestions in this brochure, the Coalition can connect you with other resources and expertise you may need to act on any of these ideas. Contact us, and we’ll help you take the next steps!

- **Rainbow comma logo for websites , brochures and signs**
www.ucc.org/about-us/ucc-logo.html
- **Rainbow comma flag, pin**
800-537-3394 (UCC Resources)
- **Coalition’s Facebook page**
www.facebook.com/ucc.coalition
- **RIPPLES e-newsletter for ONA churches**
www.uccoalition.org/news/subscribe
- **Contact us if you have a question**
office@ucccoalition.org or 216-736-3228

RESOURCES FOR OPEN AND AFFIRMING CHURCHES

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UCC COALITION
FOR LGBT CONCERNS



Your Open and Affirming covenant is an opportunity to build relationships with your neighbors. Many ONA congregations report that growth in membership is the result not only of new LGBTQ members but young heterosexual couples who are seeking a church where their children will be nurtured in a faith that excludes no one from the family of Christ.

BE PRESENT, PERSISTENT AND PATIENT

The best way a congregation can show the authenticity of its welcome is to become a dependable presence in the LGBT community. Sometimes this will be in times of crisis—when a transgender neighbor is assaulted, for example, or an LGBT student is bullied in a local school. But equally important are the opportunities for daily engagement:

- Visit the local LGBT community center. Ask if they need volunteer or financial support. (Most LGBT centers are struggling financially.)
- Examples of volunteer opportunities: suicide-prevention helpline, support groups for LGBT youth, care for LGBT elders.
- Offer your church as meeting space for LGBT community organizations. Examples: PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), AA, other recovery groups.

Tips: lgbtcenters.org, community.pflag.org

REMEMBER THE POWER OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Personal evangelism is essential: from the attitude of your greeters to the willingness of your members to explain your church's standpoint—especially in those “teachable moments” when they hear a homophobic remark or when a conversation affords an opportunity for witness. Wear a rainbow-comma pin: people will ask what it means! Carry a business card or postcard with your church's address and service schedule wherever you go.

Rainbow comma pin: 800-537-3394 (UCC Resources)

WELCOME THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

Most ONA congregations do not identify transgender people in their covenant. Initiate a serious study of transgender issues, invite transgender neighbors into the conversation, amend your ONA covenant, and publicize your welcome.

TransAction study guide: welcomingresources.org/transgender.xml

‘Call Me Malcolm’ video: 800-537-3394 (UCC Resources)

CREATE SAFE SPACE FOR LGBT YOUTH

Hold your public, private and charter schools accountable to Federal policies protecting LGBT youth from harassment and bullying. In partnership with other welcoming churches, schedule meetings with the superintendent of public schools and the governing board for charter schools. Post an “It Gets Better” video on YouTube and on your home page. Ask a suicide-prevention expert to speak at your church. Use Pride Sunday as an opportunity to publicize to parents of LGBT children that you're a safe church for their family.

UCC resources: ucc.org/children/what-can-we-do-to-stop.html

Ecumenical resources: lcna.org/resources/anti-bullying-resources-menu

ADVOCATE AND CARE FOR LGBT SENIORS

LGBT elders frequently encounter hostility in nursing homes and retirement communities. Many have been alienated from the church for most of their lives but now need support and care. Transgender seniors are especially at risk. Learn from them about their lives, and work with other churches to demand appropriate care and safety from public and private institutions. Organize a weekly social event and frequent outings for LGBT seniors. Make sure the local LGBT community center knows your church is a safe community for LGBT seniors. This can be a strong ministry for youth and seniors in your congregation.

Resources: sageusa.org, lgbtagingcenter.org

BECOME EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES FOR LGBT EQUALITY

Together with other ONA churches and our ecumenical allies, become a Christian voice for inclusion and equality. Volunteer for campaigns in your state for marriage rights or to defend the LGBT community against discriminatory laws. Send the message that your church welcomes LGBT people and stands with them for dignity and justice. Work to expand civil-rights ordinances to protect your transgender neighbors. Don't be afraid of losing your tax-exempt status: churches have wide latitude to participate in campaigns for marriage equality and civil rights.

Resources: ucc.org/ourfaithourvote, ucc.org/lgbt/issues/marriage-equality